

locals only

NEWSROOM FAX: 646-4170

TOBY WEISSMANN

Dedicated to helping those with extra challenges

SHE IS

A Costa Mesa resident and activist improving life for the disabled in Orange County.

Blind since birth, Weissmann is involved with a number of organizations, tackling such issues as improving transportation and living situations for the disabled.

AN EAST COAST TRANSPLANT

Weissmann, 44, was born and raised in the Bronx, N.Y. She attended the Light House nursery school and the New York Institute for the Blind.

Much of Weissmann's education was focused on music. She took classes in piano, music theory, music appreciation, composing and violin, among others.

In the mid-1970s, Weissmann and her late father moved from New York to La Habra.

"We decided to move here because of better services for the disabled and the blind and because of a better climate," Weissmann said.

She moved from La Habra to Costa Mesa in 1979, then to Huntington Beach, and finally back to Costa Mesa and into her current apartment in Harbor Village in 1987.

Weissmann's home is close to Orange Coast College, where she has taken computer classes and other general education classes during the last couple of years. Earlier, she was a student at the Braille Institute for the Blind in Anaheim for about four years, taking classes in poetry, typing, handwriting, home management and other subjects for independence.

Weissmann has also worked at several jobs.

"Most of them have involved selling stuff over the phone from my home," she said.

"I've sold light bulbs, flashlights, first-aid kits and trash bags. Now I'm calling residents and companies to ask them if they want brochures about creative arts and parties for kids. I also make calls to offer prepaid egal services."

ACTIVE AND INVOLVED

In her free time, Weissmann



Toby Weissmann is working to make life a little better for those with physical disabilities.

attends meetings of organizations for the disabled.

She joined the National Federation of the Blind in California in 1980 and was their secretary in 1982 and 1983.

"Now I'm just a member, but I helped out with the agendas in 1986, and I was a board member from 1990 to 1993," Weissmann said.

She is also a member of the Glass Mountain Group in Orange, a disabled advocate group with about 150 members. As the program chairwoman for the group, Weissmann arranges for camps for the disabled.

And as a member of the Jewish Disabled of Orange County, a cultural educational group, she is one of 30 members working to establish a Jewish group apartment complex for the disabled.

Such a living arrangement

would provide needed care and other services, like group outings and transportation for the disabled, and give the disabled a choice of activities to enjoy, Weissmann said.

Weissmann is also an active member of the Blind Ambitions, the Very Special Arts, and she frequently visits the senior center in Costa Mesa.

"It is important to be involved, because the disabled need more unity, so we can do more things

together instead of separately," Weissmann said.

Weissmann handles most of life's challenges herself. She gets help with house cleaning and also gets help from her neighbors with things like reading the mail.

"People are very helpful. I get help when I go shopping or go places, because people around here have known me for many years, and I seem to make friends easily."

— By Frida Andersson

Children's creative classes ready to begin

Several children's classes will be available through the Costa Mesa Community Services Department, beginning the week of Oct. 16. Among the classes to be offered are "Rhythm, Rhyme and Fun," "Kids in the Kitchen," "Introduction to Painting" and "Krafty Kids." All classes are designed to help kids be creative and gain self-confidence from their new skills. To register, visit the Neighborhood Community Center, 1845 Park Ave., Costa Mesa, between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, or call 645-8551.